



Bill Title: HB1020 - Consumer Protection - Credit Reporting - Medical Debt (Fair Medical Debt Reporting Act)

Position: SUPPORT (FAV)

To: House Economic Matters Committee

From: Erica Puentes, Legislative Coordinator, on behalf of Progressive Maryland

Dear Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby, and Committee Members,

Progressive Maryland supports HB 1020 the Fair Medical Debt Reporting Act. Progressive Maryland is a statewide grassroots advocacy group working for a more equitable and patient centered healthcare system. We regularly hear from our supporters that they are struggling with medical debt and many have been negatively impacted by the harmful practice of reporting hospital debt and other adverse information related to hospital debt to credit agencies. This harmful practice often hinders patients' ability to rent an apartment or buy a car.

One of our members experienced the harmful effects of medical debt on credit reports. After complications from a dental procedure, she had multiple ER visits to treat nerve damage, resulting in outstanding bills—yet no one informed her. Unbeknownst to her, three small unpaid bills were added to her credit report. She only discovered them after repeatedly being denied housing while applying for apartments. A landlord finally revealed that open accounts were affecting her record. Though she quickly resolved the bills, she endured a stressful and uncertain housing search in the process.

Medical debt has devastating consequences for access to essentials like housing and transportation; particularly for vulnerable populations including low-income individuals, seniors, Black and brown communities - who are disproportionately burdened by unjust healthcare and financial systems - and those with chronic illnesses or disabilities. For these and many reasons, **Progressive Maryland urges a favorable report on HB 1020.** Thank you for your consideration.